

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1522

AMEMBASSY PARIS

INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 3586

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, VS, FN, US

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH FRANCOIS MISOFFE

1. I HAD LENGTHY VISIT AFTERNOON MARCH 20 FROM FRANCOIS MISOFFE, WHO IS LEADING A FRENCH ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL MISSION TO MANILA. MISOFFE BEGAN BY DESCRIBING HIMSELF AS FORMER MINISTER IN DE GAULLE'S GOVERNMENT, FORMER AMBASSADOR TO TOKYO, FRIEND OF SAINTENNY AND CONFIDANT OF GISCARD D'ESTAING. HE SAID HE WAS CURRENTLY ON LONG FACT-FINDING MISSION IN ASIA WHICH HAD TAKEN HIM TO TOKYO, PEKING, SEOUL, PYONGYANG, SAIGON, HANOI, BANGKOK, KUALA LUMPUR, SINGAPORE, ETC. HE MADE SOME POINT OF CONTENTION THAT HIS MISSION REPORTED DIRECTLY TO GISCARD AND HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH QUAI D'ORSAY. HE ALSO STRESSED THAT HE WAS "ONLY ONE" WHO HAS VISITED ALL CAPITALS OF ASIA.

2. AFTER THIS INTRODUCTION, MISOFFE WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE BROUGHT ME GREETINGS FROM DRV VICE FOREIGN MINISTER THACH AND OTHER "COPAINS" IN HANOI. HE THEN LAUNCHED INTO
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DETAILED DISCUSSION HIS CONVERSATION WITH PHAM VAN DONG

AND SAID LATTER HAD STRESSED HIS DESIRE NEGOTIATE WITH U.S. ON CURRENT SITUATION SOUTH VIET-NAM. DONG ALLEGEDLY STATED SUCH NEGOTIATIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE PRECEDED BY (A) DEPARTURE OF THIEU, AND (B) WITHDRAWAL OF ALL U.S. TECHNICIANS. PURPOSE OF NEGOTIATIONS WOULD BE TO SET UP TIMETABLE FOR EXECUTION OF PARIS AGREEMENTS. THIS WOULD ENTAIL SPECIFIC DATES FOR CREATION OF COUNCIL OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND CONCORD, ELECTIONS, ETC., ETC. MISOFFE ASKED WHAT MY REACTION WAS TO THIS PROPOSAL.

3. I BEGAN BY STRESSING THAT I NO LONGER FOLLOWED VIET-NAM MATTERS IN DETAIL. HOWEVER, FROM MY PAST EXPOSURE TO THE NORTH VIETNAMESE, I WAS AWARE THAT PHAM VAN DONG HAD ONLY LIMITED UNDERSTANDING OF THE PARIS AGREEMENTS AND THAT MATTERS AFFECTING NEGOTIATIONS WERE GENERALLY OUTSIDE HIS COMPETENCE. THE LAO DONG LEADERSHIP HAD TAKEN CARE TO INFORM US THAT HIS FUNCTIONS WERE RESTRICTED TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF NORTH VIET-NAM, WHILE LAO DONG INTERESTS IN LAOS, CAMBODIA, AND NAM-BO WERE IN OTHER HANDS. THEREFORE, I TOLD MISOFFE THAT I PLACED VERY LITTLE STOCK IN ANYTHING ABOUT NAM-BO COMING FROM PHAM VAN DONG.

4. WHEN MISOFFE PERSISTED IN PROBING U.S. ATTITUDE TOWARDS NEGOTIATIONS WITH HANOI, I REITERATED MY STATEMENT THAT I WAS OUT OF THE MAIN STREAM OF THINGS VIETNAMESE AND HAD NO RPT NO AUTHORITATIVE INFORMATION. IN LIGHT CURRENT MASSIVE LAO DONG OFFENSIVE, HOWEVER, I EXPRESSED DOUBT WASHINGTON WAS INTERESTED IN TALKING WITH HANOI REPRESENTATIVES ABOUT MUCH OF ANYTHING.

5. COMMENT: IT IS DIFFICULT FOR ME TO KNOW WHETHER TO TAKE MASSOFFE SERIOUSLY. HE SEEMS RATHER RAFFISH TYPE, WITH PATCH OVER HIS LEFT EYE, A BREEZY MANNER, AND AN INSISTENCE ON TALKING IN RAPID BARRACKS-ROOM FRENCH DESPITE FACT HE APPEARS TO SPEAK ENGLISH FLUENTLY. I WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY PARIS VIEWS ON WHETHER GISCARD IS SERIOUSLY INFLUENCED BY THIS MAN OR WHETHER HE KEEPS HIM TRAVELLING IN ORDER TO ASSURE THAT HE STAYS AWAY FROM PARIS.

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